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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
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December 17, 2021

The Honorable Michael L. Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

I was pleased to see your confirmation as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works by the U.S. Senate. I am writing to request that the Corps of Engineers include \$12,000,000 in its spend plan pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to reimburse the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) for work conducted on the Thornton Composite Reservoir. This reimbursement is critical so that the MWRD can begin work on vital projects in Robbins, Illinois.

In 2009, in an effort to provide flood protection to communities in the face of limited resources, the MWRD executed an amendment to its Project Cooperation Agreement with the Corps of Engineers for the design and construction of the Thornton Composite Reservoir. This amendment, based on language in section 5157 of WRDA 2007, allowed the MWRD to design and construct the Thornton Composite Reservoir project and for it to be eligible for Federal reimbursement for that work. The MWRD has completed the project and the reservoir was put into service in 2015; the reservoir now provides an estimated \$27 million per year in flood reduction benefits to 14 communities and protects over 35,000 structures from flooding.¹ The MWRD submitted its costs and has been working with the Corps as it approves them in preparation for reimbursement to the MWRD.

At the same time, it has come to my attention that the MWRD has developed a project idea that I believe is particularly worthwhile and would benefit from access to some of these funds owed to the MWRD. In an effort to address underserved minority communities, the MWRD has been working with the village of Robbins, Illinois to address its chronic and longstanding flooding and stormwater management issues which have undermined the community's economic stability and quality of life. Robbins is a predominantly Black community with a substantially lower average

¹ <https://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works-Projects/Thornton-Reservoir/>

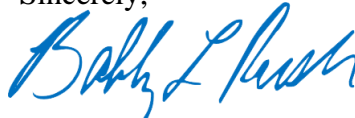
household income than the rest of Cook County and the State of Illinois.² It has struggled with water issues that have impacted its ability to prosper. Robbins is exactly the type of community President Biden had in mind when creating the Justice40 Initiative to deliver 40 percent of the overall benefits of Federal climate and environment investments to disadvantaged communities.

The MWRD has worked closely with the Robbins community and developed a flood control project that would divert water flows from Midlothian Creek and, instead, create a naturalized stormwater retention facility. This facility will be set within a park and will be a significant asset for the community, providing not only flood protection, but much-needed green space. The plan includes hiking and bike trails to connect the community to the environment, further providing a healthy climate for families.

Once completed, this project will have numerous benefits which will strengthen the community of Robbins, including providing them with a safe environment and creating a strong economic base to grow and create jobs. As the Corps begins to determine how best to address its environmental justice obligations, I strongly urge you to include \$12 million in reimbursement to the MWRD in the Corps' spend plan so that the MWRD can begin to work on this important and timely project in Robbins, Illinois.

Thank you for the consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

² <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/102881/Robbins.pdf>